

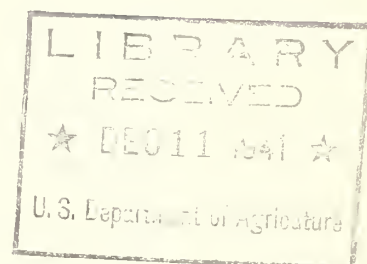
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TARGHEE SHEEP

and
Their Place in Range Sheep Production



by
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Range flocks of the West are in large part composed of sheep commonly referred to as crossbreds, but they represent various degrees of intermixture between the fine-wool sheep such as Rambouillets and long-wool sheep such as Lincolns and Cotswolds in which fine-wool range ewes of Rambouillet breeding have been bred to long-wool rams, and the ewes descending from such matings have been bred to Rambouillet rams. Breeding such as this contributes generally to lack of stability involving considerable variation in body type and marked variation in fleece types and these complicate marketing problems.

A large portion of the western ranges is adapted to the use of range ewes of Rambouillet breeding that carry one-fourth long-wool breeding. Such ewes represent what is known as the "comeback" type and are the result of mating the fine-wool range ewes to long-wool rams, and then mating the ewe progeny from this cross with Rambouillet rams. These three-quarter fine-wool or "comeback" ewes are larger than the original fine-wool range ewes and are generally considered more profitable. Such crossbreds, however, have proved difficult to maintain because they involve a continuous and somewhat complicated program of crossbreeding, due to the lack of rams of an established breed representing this general type.

In order to develop a breed from which rams could be selected that would meet these requirements the Bureau of Animal Industry began laying the foundation for the Targhee at the United States Sheep Experiment Station, Dubois, Idaho, in the fall of 1926. This foundation was laid by mating select Rambouillet rams with select ewes.

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of Corriedale x Lincoln-Rambouillet, and Lincoln x Rambouillet combinations and interbreeding the rams and ewes descending from these matings. From this combination through rigid selection has come the Targhee which is proving to be handily adapted to the range conditions suitable for three-quarter fine or "comeback" ewes.

The Targhee has been developed under range conditions, and selection has been governed by production performance under these conditions. Selection has been very rigid in ewes and critical in rams as a means of making the most rapid headway in stabilizing type.

The ranges upon which the Targhee has been developed vary from 5,000 to 8,500 feet in altitude and are typical for northeastern Idaho where a sagebrush-grass type of range prevails. Summer grazing has been available on or near the Targhee National Forest. The precipitation on the springfall range averages about 10 inches a year, most of which is in the form of snow falling from December to April. The winter range is in use until the middle of January when the winter storms usually make it necessary for the sheep to be removed to the winter feeding grounds. Supplementary feed was provided toward the end of the winter grazing period, if the winter range was short, and for several weeks before lambing and for two or three weeks after lambing. This supplementary feed was largely oats and the daily allowance per ewe varied according to their needs, but it was usually about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ pound before lambing and approximately 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ pound for two or three weeks after lambing. While on the winter feed lots they were fed about 5 or 6 pounds of alfalfa hay per ewe per day. This daily allowance of hay per ewe was an average quantity when feeding the general run of alfalfa hay, some of which may have been damaged by rain or by improper handling.

The Targhee is a white-faced, polled sheep of intermediate size. Mature rams weigh an average of about 200 pounds and mature ewes weigh about 130 pounds in good range condition. The Targhee is compact in body type and has a broad, smooth, level back. The rump and leg of mutton are well developed. The sheep of this strain are moderately low-set, and have good bone and straight legs. The ideals sought are freedom from skin folds and open faces free from wool blindness. Mature Targhee ewes shear an average of a little more than 11 pounds of unscoured wool per ewe per year with a staple length of about 3 inches. The desirable market grade of wool from Targhee sheep on the basis of fineness, as determined commercially, is largely $\frac{1}{2}$ Blood, and its commercial yield is about 45 percent of scoured clean wool.

The Targhee lambs average about 80 pounds in weight at 140 days of age when produced on the range without grain. The lambs carry considerable thickness and mature quite successfully on good feed. The ewes are good mothers and handle uniformly well on the range.